

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A stud spacer for extending between two studs comprising:
 - a. a main member adapted to extend between the two studs;
 - b. the main member including first and second end portions;
 - c. a projection extending from each end portion;
 - d. a pair of spaced apart end flanges extending from each end portion in a direction generally normal to the projection;
 - e. wherein the end flanges are disposed on opposite sides of the projection and the projection extends outwardly past the end flanges;
 - [d]f. wherein the main member ~~and~~, the projections, and the end flanges form the stud spacer; and
 - [e]g. wherein the projections of the main member are configured to interlock with similar projections of other stud spacers.
2. (Original) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein each projection includes a locking surface, an opening, a deflector disposed adjacent the opening, and a stop.
3. (Original) The stud spacer of claim 2 wherein when two projections are interlocked, the locking surface of one projection engages the stop of the other projection.
4. (Original) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein each projection is elongated and when connected to a similar projection at least partially overlies or underlies the similar projection.

5. (Previously presented) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein each of the two projections includes a deflectable terminal end and an opening.
6. (Original) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein each projection includes a terminal end portion, a locking tab disposed on the terminal end portion, a deflector disposed inwardly of the locking tab; an opening formed in the projection adjacent the deflector; and a stop disposed inwardly of the opening.
7. (Previously presented) A stud spacer assembly for extending between a series of studs, comprising:
 - a. at least first and second stud spacers wherein each stud spacer extends between a pair of studs;
 - b. said first stud spacer including a first projection and said second stud spacer including a second projection;
 - c. said first and second projections adapted to interlock so as to connect the first and second stud spacers together; and
 - d. wherein each projection includes a locking surface and a stop and wherein when interlocked, the locking surface of the first projection is engaged with the stop of the second projection and the locking surface of the second projection is engaged with the stop of the first projection.
8. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 7 wherein when connected the first and second projections overlie each other.

9. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 8 wherein each projection includes an opening and wherein when connected the first projection extends through the opening of the second projection and the second projection extends through the opening of the first projection.
10. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 9 wherein at least a portion of each projection is at least slightly yieldable such that a portion of each projection can slightly flex during the course of interconnecting the projections.
11. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 7 wherein each projection includes an opening and a deflector and wherein the locking surface of each projection is formed on a terminal end portion of the projection and wherein when connected the terminal end portion of the first projection projects through the opening in the second projection and the terminal end portion of the second projection projects through the opening in the first projection.
12. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 11 wherein the deflector of the first projection deflects the terminal end of the second projection through the opening of the first projection and wherein the deflector of the second projection deflects the terminal end of the first projection through the opening in the second projection.
13. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 7 wherein the locking surface includes a tab and the stop includes a tab receiving opening and wherein when the first and second projections are interconnected the first projection is extended

over a portion of the second projection and a portion of the first projection is inserted through the opening in the second projection such that the locking tab of the first projection seats within the tab receiving opening formed in the second projection and wherein the second projection is extended underneath a portion of the first projection and a portion of the second projection is inserted through the opening in the first projection wherein the locking tab of the second projection seats within the tab receiving opening of the first projection.

14. (Original) The stud spacer of assembly of claim 13 wherein each projection includes a deflector disposed adjacent the tab receiving opening and wherein the deflector on the first projection deflects a portion of the second projection upwardly through the opening in the first projection, and wherein the deflector in the second projection deflects a portion of the first projection downwardly through the opening in the second projection.

15. (Original) The stud spacer assembly of claim 7 wherein the locking surface of each projection includes a tab and wherein the stop of each projection includes a tab receiving opening and when the projections are connected the respective tabs are seated within the tab receiving openings.

16. (Currently amended) A wall structure, comprising:

- a. a series of spaced apart studs with each stud having an opening formed therein;
- b. a series of stud spacers extending between respective studs;

- c. each stud spacer including first and second projections that extend from opposite ends of the stud spacer, at least one of the projections extending in a generally horizontal plane, the horizontal plane being generally normal to a web of an adjacent stud;
 - d. each stud spacer further including first and second pairs of end flanges, the first pair of end flanges formed on a first end of the stud spacer and the second pair of end flanges formed on a second, opposite, end of the stud spacer;
 - e. the end flanges of the first pair of end flanges being disposed on opposite sides of the first projection and the end flanges of the second pair of end flanges being disposed on opposite sides of the second projection;
 - f. said first and second projections of each stud spacer adapted to connect to first and second projections of other stud spacers so as to interconnect the stud spacers of the wall structure; and
 - g. each projection including a locking surface and a locking stop and wherein when interconnected the locking surface of the first projection is engaged with the locking stop of the second projection and the locking surface of the second projection is engaged with the locking stop of the first projection.
17. (Original) The wall structure of claim 16 wherein when connected the respective projections at least partially overlies one another.
18. (Original) The wall structure of claim 17 wherein the first projection includes a terminal end portion and an opening and the second projection includes a

terminal end and an opening and wherein the terminal end portions of the respective projections are projected through the openings within the projections when the projections are interconnected.

19. (Currently amended) A method of interconnecting a first stud spacer with a second stud spacer extending between studs in a wall structure wherein the first stud spacer includes a first projection and the second stud spacer includes a second projection, comprising the steps of:
- a. projecting the first and second projections of the first and second stud spacers through an opening in a stud;
 - b. projecting the first projection through an opening in the second projection and engaging a locking surface associated with the first projection with a stop associated with the second projection;~~and~~
 - c. projecting the second projection through an opening in the first projection and engaging a locking surface associated with the second projection with a stop associated with the first projection; and
 - d. abutting an end flange formed on an end of the first stud spacer to a face of a web of the stud and abutting an end flange formed on an end of the second stud spacer to an opposite face of the web.
20. (Original) The method of claim 19 including engaging the first projection with a deflector associated with the second projection and deflecting the first projection through the opening in the second projection, and engaging the second projection with a deflector associated with the first projection and deflecting the second projection through the opening in the first projection.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 including at least slightly bending a portion of each projection as the two projections are interconnected.
22. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein the projections are at least slightly flexed in response to engaging the respective deflectors carried by the projections.
23. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the locking surfaces comprise locking tabs and wherein the stops comprises locking seats and wherein when the projections are interconnected the locking tabs of the respective projections are seated within the locking seats of the projections.
24. (Original) The method of claim 19 including contacting a terminal end of the first projection with a deflector disposed on the second projection and deflecting the terminal end of the first projection downwardly through the opening in the second projection; and contacting a terminal end portion of the second projection with a deflector on the first projection and deflecting the terminal end of the second projection upwardly through the opening in the first projection.
25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the locking tabs carried by the first and second projections snap into the tab receiving openings once the terminal ends of the respective projections have been inserted through the openings in the respective projections.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently amended) The stud spacer assembly of claim 7 wherein each stud spacer includes a web having opposed first and second ends, and wherein each stud spacer includes ~~one or more~~ first and second pairs of spaced apart end flanges, the first pair of end flanges disposed formed on one or both the first end portion[s] of the stud spacer and extending from the first end of the web, and the second pair of end flanges formed on the second end portion and extending from the second end, the end flanges for connecting the stud spacer to ~~one or more~~ a pair of spaced apart studs.

30. (Previously presented) The stud spacer assembly of claim 29 wherein each stud spacer includes a pair of spaced apart flanges disposed on each end portion thereof for connecting to one stud.

31. (Previously presented) The wall structure of claim 16 wherein each stud spacer includes one or more flanges disposed on opposite end portions for connecting each stud spacer to at least two spaced apart studs that form a part of the wall structure; and wherein each flange is connected to one stud such that the series of stud spacers that form a part of the wall structure are interconnected to the studs.

32. (Previously presented) The wall structure of claim 31 wherein each consecutive pair of studs of the wall structure are interconnected by a stud spacer, and wherein the stud spacer includes at least one flange disposed on opposite ends thereof, and wherein each flange is connected to one stud.
33. (Previously presented) The method of claim 19 including securing at least one of the first or second stud spacers to the stud.
34. (Previously presented) The method of claim 33 wherein each of the stud spacers includes one or more flanges disposed on one or more end portions thereof, and wherein the method includes fastening the one or more flanges of at least one of the stud spacers to the stud thereby interconnecting the stud with at least one of the stud spacers.
35. (New) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein:
- a. the end flanges are generally co-planar; and
 - b. the end flanges and the projection extend from a common end of the main member.
36. (New) The stud spacer of claim 35 wherein the end flanges are configured to abut a web of a stud.

37. (New) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein the stud spacer includes a pair of generally parallel side flanges extending normally from the main member and from one end of the main member to another end of the main member.
38. (New) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein the main member includes a web having opposite ends, the projections projecting outwardly from the ends of the web, and the web and the projections are generally co-planar.
39. (New) The stud spacer of claim 1 wherein:
- a. the main member includes a web having opposite ends, the projections project outwardly from the ends of the web, and the web and the projections are generally co-planar;
 - b. the stud spacer includes a pair of generally parallel side flanges extending normally from the web of the main member and from one end of the main member to another end of the main member;
 - c. the end flanges and the projections extending from common ends of the main member; and
 - d. the end flanges on each end portion of the main member are generally co-planar and are configured to abut a web of a stud.
40. (New) The stud spacer assembly of claim 29 wherein the first projection extends between the first pair of end flanges and outwardly from the first end of the web, and the second projection extends between the second pair of flanges and outwardly from the second end of the web.

41. (New) The stud spacer assembly of claim 40 wherein the end flanges of at least one of the pairs of end flanges are co-planar and extend in a direction normal to the web.
42. (New) The wall structure of claim 16 wherein a portion of at least one of the studs is sandwiched between one of the end flanges of one of the stud spacers and one of the end flanges of another of the stud spacers.
43. (New) The method of claim 19 wherein projecting the first projection into an opening in the second projection includes extending together the first projection and the second projection between end flanges of pairs of end flanges formed on respective ends of two of the stud spacers.
44. (New) The stud spacer of claim 7 wherein the stud spacer comprises an elongated substantially planar web and pair of side flanges extending at angles from the web and disposed on opposite sides of the web, and wherein at least one of the projections lies generally in a plane that is perpendicular to the web of the stud spacer.